

Basic Information

Title	Personnel Files for Ministers
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Status of Paper	Final
Action Required	For Decision
Resolution/s	Set out at the end of the Report.
Alternative Options to Consider, if Any	None

Summary of Content

Subject and Aims	The Methodist Conference to agree the principle of developing and maintaining personnel files for Presbyters and Deacons based on underpinning principles which safeguard their proper usage
Main Points	A pilot with the Diaconal Order will explore in detail the issues of access, security and remedy for factually incorrect information; presbyters will have files started using existing information held within the Minutes of Conference and the Connexional Database; every Presbyter and Deacon will have access to their own personnel file within the provisions of the Data Protection Act; further recommendations will be made to the Methodist Conference in 2012 following the lessons learned from the pilot.
Background Context and Relevant Documents (with function)	Personnel Files for Ministers – Conference 2009 With Integrity and Skill – Conference 2008; Appendix One; Appendix Two
Consultations	Recommendations made in an original report were amended following a discussion on the use of personnel files for Ministers held during the April 2010 Council. The original report was compiled using feedback from Ministerial Synods, District Chairs, the Warden of the Diaconal Order and consultations with individual ministers.

Summary of Impact

Standing Orders	Complaints and Discipline – the recording of any event on a personnel file may need a change to SOs. This needs to be explored and referred to the Officer for Legal and Constitutional Affairs.
Faith and Order	None
Financial	The recommendations will need increased resources to broaden the scope of the current licensing agreement for the HR Database; this amounts to circa £20k but costs can be managed over a 2–3 year period by phasing in the use of files. Ongoing costs will be circa £12–£15k per annum.

Personnel	Increased time and resources needed to administer the services – the full impact will be included in the pilot.
Legal	The proposals accord with the Data Protection Act
Wider Connexional	Improved diversity of committee membership
External (e.g. ecumenical)	The Methodist Church appears to be the only Church, amongst our main ecumenical partners, without personnel files for ministers.
Risk	The lack of personnel files for ministers places the Church at high risk with regards to neglect of and duty of care for our ministers, eg poor mechanisms for tracking and preventing issues leading to ill-health retirement and Safeguarding issues.

**'Let no one suffer hurt through
your neglect'
Towards a Healthier Church**

1. Context

- 1.1 This report and its recommendations arise because of a growing awareness of the real experiences of all Methodist ministers, the effect some of these experiences can have on them and how we can best create a system of care for them that is full of grace and integrity. Recognising the duty of care by each of us for one another, this report lays out the reasons why personnel files for all ministers are needed and how they will be handled. It also seeks to reassure all those involved of the highest levels of security and confidentiality that will underpin their use.
- 1.2 In the Conference report, *What is a presbyter?*¹ reference was made to the two elements of Episcopé or oversight; those of supervision, or discipline, and pastoral care. The report speaks of a covenantal relationship, that those who supervise should themselves be supervised and that personnel files would play their part in a mutually accountable, healthy Church.
- 1.3 The Conference report *With Integrity and Skill* highlighted the need to be clear about the boundaries for the keeping, sharing or disposing of information of a pastoral nature but also of the necessity to retain a certain amount of key information for the benefit and the purpose it was given, that is to provide better care, nurture and development for those in our Church.
- 1.4 'A healthy Christian community is a safe place of mutual care, where those within the Body of Christ and those in the neighbourhood and world beyond feel valued, loved and respected. Such valuing contributes to individual wellbeing, which in turn builds strong communities and is a witness to Christ.'²

Background

- 2.1 The Conference of 2008 directed the Methodist Council to explore the development of the use of personnel files for ministers (13.7 of *With Integrity and Skill*). The 2009 Conference noted that there should be a consultation about personnel files for ministers with a report to the 2010 Conference. *This paper sets out the findings from consultations so far and makes recommendations to the Conference.*
- 2.2 Various consultations and invitations for questions and comments on the issues of Personnel Files for Ministers were held throughout 2009 and 2010. A list of consultations and Frequently Asked Questions and Answers are shown in Appendix One.
- 2.3 The attached paper in Appendix Two was circulated to facilitate discussions during the Connexional Leaders' Forum and a District Chairs' Meeting. The paper was subsequently adapted for circulation and discussion at some Ministerial Synods.

Findings

3. There still remain pockets of concern and anxiety in some areas of the Church. The Methodist Council is confident that with a sensitive introduction to personnel files for every minister, these concerns can and will be addressed.

¹ Methodist Conference 2002 Report.

² *Encircled in Care*, Training Resource for Pastoral Carers, TMCP, MPH 2007.

4. The enquiries that have been made have highlighted the risks of not having personnel files for Ministers. Ministers (both Presbyters and Deacons) often lead isolated lives with little or no supervision or a sense of being held within the oversight of the Church. This can consequently result in feelings of being neglected during times of crises, and regarding issues leading to ill-health retirement; there is a lack of understanding and information about what reasonable adjustments could be made for a minister. Lack of clear records can hamper critical interventions when needed in disciplinary cases, and can also result in poor monitoring mechanisms with regards to safeguarding issues. Personnel files could then provide an opportunity for continuity of care which currently relies far too often on subjective information sharing.
5. During the course of this investigation it has become apparent that our main ecumenical partners have already implemented Individual personnel files for Presbyters. It is worth noting that personnel files do exist – for example for candidating, training and stationing, finance, pensions, discipline, etc. However, what we do lack is a single co-ordinated system. Such a system exists within the Diaconal Order which has personnel files for all its members, students and probationers which not only contain basic personal information but also information on each individual Deacon's years of travel, including their circuit profiles and copies of letters of understanding. This inclusive approach also appears to be the practice amongst our ecumenical partners. Furthermore, the Church of England has various databases holding a range of data on Ministers and has now initiated a project to combine them within one comprehensive database.
6. Throughout the various consultations there emerged three major themes and uncontested suggestions:
 - A) That the Methodist Diaconal Order (MDO) pilots the further use of personnel files with the understanding that as a religious order the structure of the MDO is slightly different but not so different that it would make a pilot scheme using the MDO's files ineffective.
 - B) That all ministerial candidates, both diaconal and presbyteral, have their own personnel file from September 2010 which might start with basic information such as that recorded on application forms and copies of letters of acceptance including any conditions set in their training proposals. This would be in line with the current practice of the MDO's.
 - C) That for presbyters there be a gradual phasing-in of personnel files. The first phase will be a personnel file for every presbyter composed solely of current information already available within the *Minutes of Conference* (supplemented where necessary by the Methodist connexional database).³
7. There appear to be three major themes or areas of concern:
 - a) How secure will the personnel files be if they are to be accessible online?
 - b) Who will have access to each personnel file? Will District Chairs have access to personnel files during the Stationing Matching process?
 - c) If a minister does not agree with the contents of their files, what will be the procedure for them to refute any inappropriate comments or to disagree with what is written?

Issues of Security

*'These things are your common duty and delight.
In them you are to watch over one another in love'*

*Service for the Ordination of
Presbyters 1999*

³ This is the same basic information but it also but includes the date of the latest criminal record check and details of those who do not appear in Minutes (a public document).

8. The fundamental principle guiding the setting up of personnel files must be that we are seeking to hold before us God's love and care for each one of us, and thereby help to create a healthier Church. In doing so we need to give attention to the insights set out in the report to the 2008 Conference entitled *With Integrity and Skill*. It is not the intention behind setting up these personnel files to act in secret or keep information in an undisclosed way from those involved. Procedures will be created by the Development and Personnel staff in the Connexional Team to ensure that these files are kept free from misuse.

9. What does *With Integrity and Skill* say about the holding of information?

'Christian theology issues a challenge to a mindset based on a fundamental mistrust of other people. The Church proclaims its belief in God who not only knows everything about us (Psalm 139:1-5) but also can safely be trusted *with that knowledge* (Psalm 103:1-5). Further, the Church claims to act out God's mission of knowing and caring, being the Body of Christ who when on earth both knew (John 1:48) and could be trusted with knowledge (Luke 19:1-10). Such a claim imposes the highest possible responsibility for the safe holding of knowledge. This responsibility belongs to the whole Body, not just to selected individuals within it. While the writer of Psalm 139 speaks of God's knowledge of the individual, that knowledge is set within the corporate context of the covenant community.'⁴

10. Personnel files for Ministers will be hosted on a proprietary Human Resources database that has been developed using *Sequel* as the operating system and will require a Sequel server on the Church's IT systems. The software has been written specifically to satisfy the high security demands of Human Resources professionals and is used by numerous employers to maintain personnel data with full confidence.

11. The issues of system security and data integrity are taken extremely seriously. Security testing and safeguarding integrity of data will continue throughout the pilot with the Diaconal Order over and above the steps that the Team is currently taking towards obtaining an international standard of IT security.

12. To improve security generally, the IT staff of the Connexional Team have recently commissioned an IT Security Audit. The external auditors found the current security system to be robust and their recommendations focused more on policy areas. The IT Team is now working towards gaining the ISO standard ISO 27001 which is an international standard for IT systems and security.

13. It will be possible to access one's own personnel file using technology once a file has been set up for the Minister and a password and security level access has been provided. All accesses to personnel files will leave an audit trail which will be monitored and any unauthorised access will be addressed via the relevant Complaints and Discipline procedures. Modern day technology has made sufficient advances in terms of security so that it is possible to secure areas of the internet. Everyday examples are the use of internet banking, Pay Pal, Amazon, E-bay, booking and paying for theatre/ events tickets online, etc.

Issues of Access and Neglect

'To minister Christ's love and compassion; to serve others in whom you serve the Lord himself'

Ordination Service for Presbyters 1999

14. In both the Conference Report 2008 *With Integrity and Skill* and the consultation "Holiness and Risk" in 2009, a major theme which emerges is the sense of loneliness and isolation that too many Ministers feel, particularly when they have had to witness intense suffering. These are the moments when our Ministers most need the collegiality and support of one

⁴ Methodist Conference Report 2008.

another. Many Ministers feel that they have to be resilient and strive onward, and too many Ministers do so without regular supervision, without a framework for support or without help from senior colleagues. Most Ministers become more isolated when they feel they are alone with their problems or they feel they cannot seek help or show weakness. When a crisis occurs, they often feel that they are forgotten. In working towards a healthier Church it is expected that the overwhelming majority of Ministers will benefit from their Superintendents and District Chairs sharing either directly or indirectly in their various activities, successes, highlights, low periods, and other memorable life events during the course of their active ministry.

15. It is also of benefit both to the Minister and the wider Church for there to be a record of sabbatical leave, parental leave and other career breaks or changes, including further training or academic work and for these to be promoted. Sometimes it is difficult for Ministers to feel they can take longer breaks or seek refreshment as it puts pressure on others. However holding a record of these things connexionally establishes them firmly within the aegis of the covenant relationship and helps to guarantee that fair systems are in place or are created in order to evaluate them.
16. It is good practice for there to be regular supervision and better support frameworks for those in active ministry. For these to be most effective, Superintendents and District Chairs need to be able to understand better the complex issues involved during either one particular situation or a series of events in a person's ministry. For that they need to be able to have access to the information in a personnel file. Too often, the feeling of loneliness, isolation and helplessness reaches intolerable levels, and is witnessed only at the time of crises. On some occasions that in turn may lead to ill-health or a request for early retirement.
17. There may also be times when a Minister needs to be gently but firmly guided. It is important to remember that the focus of personnel files is not about the disciplinary proceedings related to Ministers, for which a separate process exists (Part 11 of CPD). Rather this development is proposed so that the Church can better be 'Good stewards of God's grace' (1 Peter 4:10), serving each other with 'whatever gift each has received'. Whilst Complaints and Discipline cases are very well documented through separate processes and procedures, there still remain issues with the ways in which the existence of such cases is communicated. Whilst the Standing Orders are clear on this, Discipline Committees have considerable freedom to build into their judgments how supervision and communication of information should take place. Equally at a very early stage of a complaint a search of the records is required. In the past, protocols in the processes that have prevented the sharing of information about disciplinary matters and complaints has meant that repeated problems are not been picked up and addressed as early as possible to address habitual behaviour. The documentation of such events in a personnel file affords this opportunity which later can be used to initiate open, frank and meaningful discussions about the support mechanisms that some Ministers may need to have in place in order to address some behavioural issues.
18. We need to remain mindful of the report of 2002 to the Methodist Conference *Domestic Abuse and the Methodist Church – The Way Forward* which cites that one in five women and one in nine men proportionally are victims of domestic abuse within our Church.⁵ Unfortunately the statistics also show that there are still those who suffer silently at the hands of our own Ministers. Unless we start to have systems for documentation such as personnel files we cannot guarantee accurate and timely reporting let alone individual good practice by all our Ministers. As unpalatable as this may seem, the statistics for domestic abuse within the Church reflect those within wider society.⁶ Therefore these are key societal issues that we need to monitor within our own Church. In the worst case scenarios,

⁵ Third party information is protected within the Data Protection Act and can be withheld for subject access.

⁶ The same things apply with regard to safeguarding children and vulnerable adults.

documentation provides us with the evidence needed to address such behaviour and supervise the individual's practice appropriately in a God-centred way. The Church also needs to be able to demonstrate that it is responding effectively and accountably to concerns that are raised with it, and learns lessons for good practice.

19. On the issue of Stationing, it is suggested that District Chairs have access to the files of presbyters and deacons within their District but that it will not be considered appropriate for District Chairs to access the personnel files of other Ministers until they move into it. One advantage of having electronic personnel files is that various user levels can be ascribed and given limited access. This means a Superintendent will only ever have access to those files within their circuits. A District Chair will only ever have official access to files. Better communication about the circumstances of all Ministers by the use of confidential personnel files will also be piloted with the Methodist Diaconal Order (MDO).

20. Professionalism

'God fed them according to the integrity of his heart; and guided them by the skilfulness of his hands.'⁷

'There can be tension between those in the Church convinced of a need to be more 'professional', including the introduction of job descriptions for clergy and lay workers, supervision, quality assurance and accountable appraisal, and those who believe the Church to be a different kind of organisation. There need not be a clash between the 'professional' view and the 'covenantal' view. Regardless of personal preference about which perspective is most appropriate in a Christian pastoral context, the need for good practice and appropriate boundaries remains the same... .

... The appropriate retention and passing on of information about individuals (eg, a lay-worker requiring a reference or a presbyter or deacon moving between Districts) is an important part of establishing or retaining the trust of people within the Church and beyond.'⁸

Issues of remedy for disagreements on personnel files

'Fulfil your calling as disciples of Jesus Christ, who came not to be served but to serve. In all things, give counsel and encouragement To all whom Christ entrusts to your care.'

Ordination service for Deacons 1999

21. It is inappropriate for a personal judgement or opinion to be placed in a personnel file. Where there is a supervisory opinion or pastoral concern, this should be made in context, must be factual and evidence based, such as through structured interviews, panels, one to one discussions or observed behaviour. Where actions have been taken this should also be noted factually and dated.
22. The issues of remedy for disagreements and proposals for their procedures will be explored during the pilot with the Methodist Diaconal Order (MDO).

⁷ Psalm 78.72.

⁸ *With Integrity and Skill, Methodist Conference Report 2008.*

*****RESOLUTIONS**

- 34/1. (a)**The Conference adopted the principle of developing and maintaining personnel files for presbyters and deacons, underpinned by the following objectives:
- to enable personal and professional development;
 - to foster mutual accountability;
 - to assist in the provision of care by the connexion to the individual presbyter or deacon;
 - to provide essential safeguards;
 - to keep historical records;
 - to work within the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998 and any other relevant legislation
- (b)**The Conference directed that such files shall be established in accordance with the process set out in Resolutions 34/2 and 34/3 below and thereafter held and maintained by the Secretary of the Conference and his or her delegated representatives.
- 34/2.** The Conference directed that the process of establishing personnel files for all presbyters should begin in September 2010, based on details currently available in the Minutes of Conference and the existing connexional database; and that a personnel file for every existing deacon should be established during the Connexional year 2010–2011.
- 34/3.** The Conference directed that further use of personnel files for Ministers should be piloted with the Methodist Diaconal Order, focusing particular attention on: a) Issues of security b) Issues of access c) Issues of remedy for factually incorrect information; and that this pilot should run from January 2011 to December 2011 with a review and recommendations being brought to the Conference by 2012.
- 34/4** The Conference noted that all Ministers will be able to have access to their own personnel files within the provisions of the Data Protection Act.

APPENDIX ONE

Consultations held:

1. April Council 2009 and April Council 2010
2. The Warden of the Diaconal Order (ongoing)
3. Connexional Leaders' Forum Sept 2009
4. District Chairs Meeting January 2010
5. Personnel Files Working Party (ongoing) (consisting of three District Chairs)
6. London Ministerial Synod March 2010
7. Ecumenical Partners (ongoing)
8. Ongoing feedback from Ministerial Synods still to be held in 2010
9. Individual Ministers (ongoing)
10. Connexional staff e.g. Equalities and Diversity Officer and Safeguarding Advisor

FAQs from Ministerial Synod

1. What are the legal requirements for personnel files? *Please see details in tab 2*
2. Can Ministers have a firm assurance that they will be fully entitled to see everything in their personnel files rather than “virtually all”? *The Data Protection Act requires that sometimes an issue is shared with a third party and so information sharing would not be appropriate, hence the term “virtually all”.*
3. Are these proposals suitable for circuit use e.g. for dealing with appointments in the stationing processes? *This will be piloted with the Diaconal Order, and in consultation with the Working Party within the District Chairs*
4. Gifts out there not leading to headhunting purposes = *will pilot with Deacons how to avoid headhunting for committee purposes, training opportunities, etc.*
5. Do other Churches have parallel requirements? *The Church of England, URC, Baptist Union of GB all have personnel files*
6. Do we need to separate information about curtailment processes from that about disciplinaries *Agreed. File tabs have been redesigned accordingly*
7. Statistics to ensure that committees etc have fair representation = *will include in Equal Opportunities Key Performance Indicators*
8. Who has access? *There will be judicial use and access by Superintendents and District Chairs. Audit trail will track any inappropriate access which is subject to the relevant disciplinary procedures.*
9. Why “virtually all” and not all of my personal file = *may be others involved in group issues*
10. Why is the pilot with the Diaconal Order when they have their own structure and issues which are not the same as Presbyteral ones? *The point is taken and tabs have been re-designed accordingly*
11. When disputes arise what recourse will I have about inappropriate comments on my own personnel file? How will disagreements be settled? What can I add to my personnel file? *We will be writing up procedures for this and pilot with Deacons*
12. What will we be put into place to provide better tracking of patterns for support and wellbeing of Ministers?, *We will pilot this with the Deacons.*
13. Are files deleted at the time of “sitting down”? *We usually keep a file for 6 years and then destroy them. It would be good to keep at least a one page history of our ministers for heritage purposes. It is worth mentioning that the Diaconal Order have a ledger that contains a page on each deacon that goes back approximately over one hundred years.*
14. Ordinary internet/intranet security is not sufficient: what guarantees of security will there be? = *we will be testing the security of the files and this will be consistently done throughout the pilot. There is an audit trail and any inappropriate access will be subject to disciplinary procedures*
15. Will Chairs be able to access personnel files in the stationing process? *Only for Ministers in their own District. It is likely that individual ministers profiles will be included in personnel files as will relevant circuit profiles.*

APPENDIX TWO

PAPER PREPARED FOR DISTRICT CHAIRS AND SUBSEQUENTLY ADAPTED FOR DISCUSSIONS AT MINISTERIAL SYNOD BY THE DISTRICT CHAIRS "WORKING PARTY FOR PERSONNEL FILES FOR MINISTERS"

Personnel Files for Ministers

Background

The 2009 Conference *approved that consultation be undertaken with a view to bringing final proposals for policies and procedures for Personnel Files for Ministers to the Conference of 2010*. Some concerns were raised about the potential use of the internet and security risks in that, and also about how the information might be used, for example, in the stationing process. Assurances were given that there would be proper consultation, and that comments and suggestions about this would be welcome.

The world of the Church has changing contexts. These include: the changing responsibilities for confidentiality issues within the context of pastoral care and Complaints and Discipline procedures; legislative developments in the areas of data protection and freedom of information; good practice in matters of confidentiality of the whole of the Church's life and regarding the keeping of records which have a significant impact on this.

A key element of the covenant relationship between the Conference and the Ordained Ministry comes through the pastoral care of presbyters practised by Chairs and Superintendents and in the case of deacons, the Warden of the Order. That element of the care of the ministerial community is the primary method of such care. However there is evidence that as a result of the change of personnel who offer that care (for example as a result of the movement of ministers around the Connexion) there is for some a loss of information which would be helpful in the delivery of support, supervision, mentoring and encouragement of ministers. New pastoral and working relationships often need to be established after each annual stationing round.

The lack of such a system of personnel files may have its roots in the scepticism of student and workers' movements campaigning against secretive institutions and governments which kept files on its citizens, workers or students. This culture of suspicion and secrecy is endemic in organisations which lack trust and agreed purpose. However, there is much evidence to support the contention that the Methodist Church in Britain is becoming more focussed and self aware in its purposes and work, and more mature and confident. There was also probably a feeling that individuals entered the ordained ministry as the result of a call from God and that it was in his strength alone that they would cope. We recognise that one of the ways in which God provides for his children is via the mutual support and accountability that can be provided via effective relationships and sensitive guidance from colleagues at local and connexional level. These developments support the introduction of personnel files.

The present situation is that files created by the Candidating process are sent for shredding at the end of a candidate's training.⁹ There is a consequent lack of appropriate information which can mean there is a diminishing of pastoral care through ignorance caused by a lack of such information. Moreover this lack of retention of information does not allow for ministers to indicate areas of interest, research, publications etc in a way that can be known to others.

⁹ It is noted however that the Methodist Diaconal Order have personnel files on all its members, students and probationers which not only contain basic personal information but also information on each individual deacons years of travel including their circuit profiles.

There are two theological themes which relate to this subject. It is important to remember that the focus of personnel files is not about the disciplinary proceedings related to ministers, for which a completely separate process exists (Part 11 of CPD). Rather this development is proposed so that the Church can better be 'Good stewards of God's grace' (1 Peter 4:10), serving each other with 'whatever gift each has received'. The constant testimony of Presidents and Vice-Presidents at the end of their term of office, or anyone who has the privilege of visiting widely around the Connexion, is that there are all kinds of gifts and graces in the Church, its ministers and lay people which are simply not acknowledged or used in the best way because they are not widely known. The consequence is that in this respect the Church is not being a good steward of God's grace.

It is important to confirm that the development of personnel files is not a substitute for pastoral care and mentoring of ministers. Rather the establishment of personnel files is one important way of ensuring there is sufficient information about a minister's background, initial and on-going training and ministry experience, to ensure that as a minister 'travels', the Methodist Church can provide appropriate support and encouragement. In tandem with the care and mentoring of Chairs of District, Warden of the MDO and Superintendent Ministers, the profile that a personnel file will bring will enable the harnessing of skills, bring a culture of development, celebrate the gifts of ministry, support mutual accountability and give substance for the whole of a minister's life of service, thus supporting and enhancing the covenant relationship between the minister and the Methodist Conference. Personnel files, then, are not to be viewed as an end in themselves, but rather as a tool that will be available to assist in this process of continual ministry development.

Consultations with District Chairs

A consultation at the District Chairs meeting in September 2009 and again in January 2010 highlighted in more detail how personnel files may be used to fuller effect throughout the Church. The following issues were highlighted as being important areas of content:

- Background information on candidates and probationers
- Summary of work done for the Church for the purpose of writing obituaries. We have no records on how, when and where a minister has served the Church which could be seen as disrespectful to them.
- Summary of issues regarding ill health and recommendations for support and response such as adaptation of facilities/premises, after-care following a serious illness or operation/outcome of complaints
- Training and development needs of the minister, and how these might be met
- Ministerial development: guidance and information – it would be helpful to know what opportunities exist that may enable some ministers to plan a path where they may be interested in more specialist/senior roles within the church
- Opportunities for further development of skills and experience within current roles
- Immigration details, which are required by law
- Safeguarding status, required by law
- References
- Information about books authored, music composed, etc.
- for Methodist Heritage purposes (Opportunity for a talent database where gifts and skills can be searched for)

There were discussions as to what information should be held by whom, who would have access to these files and how would the files be kept secure. These discussions are reflected in the recommendations of this paper.

It is also important to consider what information would be useful at District level and Circuit level.

Data Protection and Security Issues

It is proposed that access to the database would be password protected with unique passwords to each individual user and all passwords would have an automatic expiry date. The database provider would be UK based, as would all technical support. In addition all data would be stored and used in line with the Data Protection Act, to ensure appropriate confidentiality and security. The Connexional Team will be obtaining software that will establish an audit trail every time someone accesses the files. This audit trail will identify the user, their computer identification, the data accessed and the date and time of access.

Pointers for discussion and agreement at Synods

1. What information would be useful to keep on personnel files?

It was agreed at the District Chairs meeting that it would be very helpful to have personnel information about probationers or new ministers coming into circuits. Inclusion of a simple personal summary statement which could include contributions from the minister/probationer and possibly references was suggested. There also needs to be a more detailed commentary about health and disability issues so that people can be supported in their ministry. This will help prevent many of the Wellbeing issues and cases we are handling at the moment.

The various aspects highlighted by District Chairs reflect the need for better duty of care from the Church towards the needs of ministers in active duty and personnel files need to contain this relevant information. Their suggestions about what such files might usefully contain are embodied in the draft record in Annex 1 below which can be used as a starting point for discussion.

2. Who would have access to the files?

It is proposed that the Warden would have access to all personnel files of the Diaconal Order. Some Connexional Team staff (such as Development and Personnel and Finance) will also have access to personnel files as appropriate. What about Chairs??

3. How should we phase-in the practice of keeping personnel files for ministers?

Discussions with District Chairs suggest the following two phases:

Phase One

- Revd William Anderson (2005)
- Each minister has a file containing just information currently available in the Minutes of Conference [supplemented where necessary by the Methodist Connexional database].¹⁰
- It was suggested that candidates and probationers for 2010/11 be the first to begin having fuller records

Phase Two

Invite further information from ministers to be kept on their personnel files such as gifts and talents, special interests, sabbaticals, committees interested in serving, etc.

Pilot Scheme

It is proposed that the introduction be on a pilot basis initially, using the Diaconal Order given that the files already exist. This allows for lessons to be learnt amongst a relatively small group of ministers prior to full implementation. It is suggested that the above proposal would fulfill the wishes of Conference in establishing personnel files for ministers based on the principles of

¹⁰ Such as a record of criminal record check.
factual accuracy and verifiable data and the rights of the individual under Data Protection

legislation would be paramount.

Annex 1: Data which might be contained in a personnel file – is It is proposed that the file could be divided into six sections or ‘tabs’ as follows:

Tab 1: Existing information – this section would contain information which is already held on Ministers from the Minutes of Conference and statutory checks. Everyone can have access to this information.

Tab 2: Existing information – data held currently to fulfill the covenant relationship and duty of care.

Tab 3: The history of curtailments – This would only be available to District Chairs and would consist only of factual information which is accurate and verifiable. Its purpose would be to assist District Chairs in their support of individual ministers, including appropriate stationing. It should be noted that curtailments are not necessarily a negative event but in fact may be a positive event. Curtailment for Deacons does not carry with it the negative connotations that it often does for Presbyters as some diaconal appointments are curtailed simply because the work a Deacon was asked to do is completed, or ready to be handed on. In other cases, the circuit has simply run out of the financial resources to support a diaconal appointment and therefore a curtailment follows.

Tab 4: – data held on development and training, special interests in committees, specialisms, etc.

Tab 5: The history of disciplinary issues. This would only be available to District Chairs and would consist only of factual information which is accurate and verifiable. Its purpose would be to assist District Chairs in their support of individual ministers, including appropriate stationing.

Tab 6: Pastoral information – information collated by the Candidating process and through Stationing Advisory Committee, related Stationing information including the Stationing Profile. This would be available to District Chairs and will be automatically included in personnel files.

Tab 7: Medical information – for example details of disabilities and related information which has the potential to impact on a minister’s stationing and ability to fulfill their ministry. This would of course be held in accordance with the relevant legislation on medical records. This would be available to all District Chairs and relevant personnel within the Connexional Team.

Tab One: Existing information already held in the Minutes of Conference and as a result of statutory requirements or similar.	
Name	Harold Boothroyd
Date of birth	24/08/1956
Gender	Male
Ethnic Origin	White UK
Postal Address (manse)	
Postal Address (office)	(where applicable)
Email Address	
Telephone (manse)	
Telephone (office)	(where applicable)
Mobile	

Tab Two: Information held currently for the covenant relationship and duty of care	
Emergency Contact Details	
Immigration Status	Right to work in UK renewal date:
Safeguarding checks	Enhanced CRB received: 1/8/2008 renewal due 1/5/20013
National Insurance Number	
Tax code	
Payroll number	
Stipend	
Current Allowances	
Normal pension date	
Pension scheme opt out	Yes/No

Tab Three: Curtailments	
Curtailments	April 1998 – work completed on Youth Project
	August 2003 – report completed on youth offenders rehabilitation
	Volunteered to move from circuit during a circuit restructure in Isle of Wight, 1997. Appointment was curtailed and was subsequently stationed in High Wycombe from September 1997.

Tab Four: Personal Development and Training Record	
Courses Attended and Dates	
Interests for further study	
Interest in Committee groups	
Other interests	
Specialism/s – if any	

Tab Five: Disciplinarys or Complaints * if agreed *	
Disciplinarys	None recorded
Complaints	August 2003 Complaint received of receiving inappropriate payments for baptismal services. Complaint found to be unsubstantiated.

Tab Six : Pastoral Information (available from Candidating, Stationing Advisory Committee, and Stationing Committee)	
Experience prior to ordination	Engineer 1978-82
Date baptized	5 April 1957
Date received into membership	4 July 1972
Date admitted as local preacher	1980
Other church roles	Ran Youth Work 1979-82
Other community roles	Prison visitor 1980
Year successfully candidated	1982 (retain C1 form and CSC outcomes letter)
Ministerial Training Record	(Details of college attended and qualification)
Academic qualifications	BSc Engineering 1977, Newcastle; Diploma in Pastoral Studies 1984 (Cantab); MA in Emerging Church, Cliff College 1994.
Probation	Date entered circuit ministry
Ordination and reception into full connexion	1986
Year of travel	1984
Circuits served in date order	Barnsley, 1984-89; Isle of Wight, 1989-97; High Wycombe 1997-2006; Winchester (Super) 2006-
Other appointments in date order	Prison Chaplain 1989-93 (part time, one day a week)
Other district or connexional responsibilities	District Property Secretary 1985-87
Committees served	Faith and Order 1992-1998
Dates of sabbaticals	1994, 2001, 2008
Published works (books, articles, journals)	Christian/Hindu conversations in Rochdale, May 2001
Relevant interests and attainments	Fluent in Hindi

Tab Seven: Medical Information	
Disability/impairment information	Back problems following injury - unable to stand for long periods.
Medical referrals	Report dated 21/7/09 from Occupational Health Provider recommending adaptations to workplace.

Why personnel files are important

Good personnel records can help us to:

1. know better who our ministers are, particularly from the information they share with us about themselves during the Candidating process;
2. grow together with our ministers by being able to keep track of their lives, experiences, aspirations and concerns and enabling us to provide support when needed;
3. better track patterns in ministers lives which need early interventions/corrections so that no minister is left alone and unsupported in their time(s) of need;

4. identify/predict the type of support that is likely to be needed for various circumstances;
5. identify where we may have made errors which we can then correct;
6. identify and support ministers who have exceptional talents and gifts;
7. keep effective and accurate records;
8. keep appropriate records of the complaints and discipline processes: this is a matter of good practice in terms of support for the individual minister, particularly when they move to a new appointment;
9. enable ministers to receive their correct stipend, holidays, pension and other entitlements and benefits;
10. treat all ministers fairly and equally with equal access to available allowances, funds and services;
11. share information across the Church so that ministers are aware of their rights and responsibilities and are aware of access to various opportunities as they arise;
12. enable the Church to maximise the use of various gifts and talents so that the collective gifts and skills are utilised in the furtherance of mission and God's work;
13. identify training and development opportunities for ministers so that they reach their full potential;
14. make decisions based on fact rather than guesswork;
15. know of absence levels, sickness, accidents, lateness, discipline etc, and take appropriate and timely action including identifying appropriate pastoral and support needs;
16. plan for the future e.g. to identify trends with regards to Candidating, Stationing and retirements and take steps to address any shortfalls predicted;
17. identify any areas that need improvement. For example, personnel records, and the statistics they provide, are important in helping to develop policies free from any bias on grounds of sex, race, age or disability;
18. monitor fair and consistent treatment, for example in relation to opportunities for serving on various committees, discipline, and for training and development purposes;
19. keep historical and heritage records of our ministers and for the ministry – something we currently do not have;
20. better network in terms of contacts and information sharing;
21. make better use of our gifts and skills particularly when trying to set up committees, meetings, working parties, special projects, etc., and identifying ministers with "hidden talents".

Care must be taken over access to personnel records, as described more fully in the Data Protection Act 1998. The 1998 Data Protection Act completely replaces the Data Protection Act of 1984. The new Act introduces the concept of privacy of information, and extends and broadens the protection given to workers. The Information Commissioner's Codes of Practice give guidance on how to comply with the act and the code dealing with employment records is particularly useful in helping employers to distinguish between absence and sickness records. Information about individuals must never be passed to those with no legitimate interest, and the information held on any individual must be objective and accurate. Individuals have the right of access to virtually all personal files relating to them, and can require the organisation to justify decisions that have been made, including those made with the assistance of computer systems that sift applications, or draw up shortlists.